



PRESS RELEASE

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First Responders Honored for Acts of Heroism in a Vehicle Crash

Dover, Del. – Levy Court Commissioners honored two Firefighters/Emergency Medical Technicians and a Delaware State Trooper on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at its 7pm Business Meeting. They received the Kent County Life Saving Award for their heroic response to a motor vehicle collision that occurred on Friday, February 24, 2023.

As he proudly presented the Life Saving Awards to the recipients, Levy Court President Terry Pepper said, “It’s always a pleasure to bestow this award to our own”, referring to the two Department of Public Safety Paramedics receiving the awards and medals. Unfortunately, a third recipient, Delaware State Trooper Thomas Catalfano of Troop 3 could not be present.

At 7:29 p.m., on Friday, February 24th the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Company and mutual aid companies responded to a motor vehicle collision with vehicles reported on fire and entrapment at Bay Road and Trap Shooters Road in Magnolia.

Within two minutes, a Basic Life Support Unit arrived on the scene with Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technicians Joshua Norris and Lindsay Adams. As Adams exited the emergency unit, she advised Kent Center of a two-vehicle motor vehicle collision with one vehicle fully involved with an occupant still believed to be inside and the second vehicle 1/2-3/4 involved with a trapped driver.

As Adams was giving her report to Kent Center, Norris grabbed the fire extinguisher from their unit and made his way up to the second vehicle with Adams. As they approached the second vehicle, Adams noticed that the driver was trapped, conscious and verbal. At this time there was heavy fire in the rear portion of the vehicle with fire rapidly making its way to the front of the passenger compartment towards the driver. With no protective gear and no regards to her personal safety, Adams entered the passenger side of the vehicle and initiated patient contact and attempted to free him with the assistance of Delaware State Trooper Thomas Catalfano (Troop 3) and an unknown bystander.

Meanwhile, Norris was discharging the fire extinguisher into the vehicle to keep the fire at bay in conjunction with the rescue attempt. Seconds later, it is believed that the fuel tank had ruptured intensifying the fire and stunning Adams. It was at this time Trooper Catalfano and the bystander rapidly removed Adams from the vehicle to safety. Fire was then noticed advancing up the outside of the vehicle into the driver’s side window. Norris changed positions to the driver’s side and

began to knock down the fire and protect the trapped driver. Norris then again repositioned to the passenger side of the vehicle where he discharged the remainder of the contents of the extinguisher into the vehicle. At the same time Trooper Catalfano without regard for his own safety entered the burning vehicle and was able to free the driver and rapidly remove him while noticing that the patients clothing was on fire entirely up his left side and back. He was placed on the ground and rolled around, and a piece of clothing was used to smother the flames on the patient.

Simultaneously a handline was placed in service off Rescue 55 and the nozzleman placed the stream on a modified fog pattern and sprayed the patient and rescuers briefly to extinguish the vehicle fire. At this point Norris began patient care and Kent County Paramedic Jennifer Sweetman arrived and began advanced life support interventions. During the time of this rescue Adams discovered another victim believed to be the passenger of the same vehicle lying on the ground in the field away from the car. After having sustained burns to her arms, Adams still rendered care to this patient until the second basic lifesaving unit arrived and assumed care. Adams then returned to the original patient and assisted her partner with care.

A stretcher was obtained by a firefighter and taken to the patient being treated. Immediate care was continued by Adams and Norris as well as Kent County Paramedics Jennifer Sweetman and Ken Kelly. With an extended ETA of DSP aviation, it was decided to rapidly transport the patient by ground to Bayhealth Kent Campus. Continuous and constant patient care was provided throughout the transport and upon arrival at Bayhealth. The patient was conscious and speaking with ED staff.

If it had not been for the selfless actions taken by Adams, Norris and Trooper Catalfano as well as the unidentified bystander coupled with the immediate patient care given by Emergency Medical Service responders, then the patient would have undoubtedly perished in the vehicle on scene. The actions portrayed during this rescue were nothing less than heroic and the pristine teamwork was inspiring. These actions are of the highest standards of the Public Safety field and a display of complete selflessness of these individuals and their commitment to serve their community. These individuals are a credit to themselves, their department, and their noble profession.

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